AP-Adjacency and Ambiguity in the Noun Phrase

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Introduction
An asymmetry exists between head-final and head-initial languages in terms of the ordering of adjectival and prepositional modifiers of nouns. Head-final languages allow adjectives to precede prepositional phrases and vice versa, but head-initial languages only allow the order in which the adjective is adjacent to the noun. I propose a linear, rather than a structural, analysis of this observation; this analysis accounts for observed ambiguities in the relevant phrases.

English
The English phrase the fake picture from the 15th century is ambiguous:
- [fake picture] from the 15th century
- [picture from the 15th century]
This ambiguity is due to the underlying structure of the sentence.
- [[N [AP] PP]]
- [N [AP PP]]
In English, the adjectival and prepositional modifiers appear on opposite sides of the noun. In languages like Spanish, Welsh, Arabic and Hebrew, both modifiers occur after the noun, whilst in Japanese, Turkish, Finnish and Hungarian they occur before it. This observation leads to several questions, such as:
- Is the order of the modifiers fixed in head-initial and head-final languages?
- If so, does the same ambiguity arise as in English?

Examples
Japanese:
- Hanako-kara-no akai hanataba
  Hanako-from-Uk red bunch of flowers
  “The red bunch of flowers from Hanako”
- akai Hanako-kara-no hanataba
  red bunch of flowers from Hanako
  “The red bunch of flowers from Hanako”

Welsh:
- Y llun llun o’r 15fed ganrif
  The picture fake from-the 15th century
- Y llun o’r 15fed ganrif llun
  The picture from-the 15th century fake
  “The fake picture from the 15th century”

Why a Linear Condition?
An alternative to the proposed linear condition is a structural analysis of the phenomenon. This type of analysis relies on the adjective and noun first forming a constituent (to the exclusion of the PP), so that the PP cannot intervene. Such an approach successfully rules out the illicit N-PP-AP order, but does not allow for the ambiguity observed in the N-AP-PP order of head-initial languages.

AP-Adjacency
The concord domain of a phi-feature set S consists of those APs that are marked for S and any XP intervening between a carrier of S and the noun.
No category lacking S can precede a category marked for S in S’s concord domain.

References

Results
In head-final languages, both orders are allowed (contra Adger).*
- Each order is unambiguous
- Scope follows c-command patterns.

In head-initial languages, only the AP-adjacent order is allowed.
- The order in which the PP intervenes between the noun and the adjective is ungrammatical.
- The AP-adjacent order is ambiguous.

The ambiguity arises because the same linear string, N-AP-PP, is associated with two different underlying structures (the first and third trees in the next column). The two trees have different c-command relations, resulting in two different scopal relations associated with the same string. Therefore the string is ambiguous.